

REMARKS

Applicants reply to the Office Action dated August 28, 2006 within the shortened three-month statutory period for reply. Claims 1-15 were pending in the application and the Examiner objects to claims 7, 8, 10 and 13-15 and rejects claims 1-6, 9, 11 and 12. Support for the amendments may be found in the originally-filed specification, claims, and figures. No new matter has been introduced by these amendments. Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended in the telephone conference with Applicants attorney on September 19, 2006. In the telephone conference, Applicants and Examiner agreed that the claims (claims 1-15) filed with the substitute specification mailed by Applicants on August 19, 2004 are pending in the application. Applicants attorney authorized the Examiner to enter the status identifiers on each of the claims (claims 1-15) filed with the substitute specification mailed by Applicants on August 19, 2004. Applicants also authorized the Examiner to enter the claims (claims 1-15) filed with the substitute specification mailed by Applicants on August 19, 2004 as the pending claims, thereby not entering the amendments in the Preliminary Amendment filed with this continuation application on January 28, 2004 (or in the alternative, considering the substitute specification claims as the pending claims which further amend any pending claims).

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 7, 8, 10 and 13-15. Applicants amend claim 1 to add the elements of claim 10, amend claim 7 to add the elements of claim 1, amend claim 12 to add the elements of claim 13, amend claim 14 to add the elements of claim 12 and amend claim 15 to add the elements of claim 12. The remaining claims (claims 2-6, 9 and 11) variously depend from amended independent claim 1 which incorporates the allowable subject matter. Applicants cancel claims 10 and 13 without prejudice to filing one or more applications having claims with similar subject matter.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a)

The Examiner rejects claims 1, 2 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being anticipated by Shioto (sic). Applicants request clarification to determine if the Examiner is asserting Shiota, et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,337,712 and/or Shiota US 2002/0032909. Nonetheless, Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. However, to expedite prosecution, Applicants assert that the above amendments to independent claim 1 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of claim 10 render this rejection moot.

Claims 2 and 9 depend from independent claim 1, so Applicants assert that claims 2 and 9 are differentiated from the cited references for the same reasons as set forth above, in addition to their own respective features.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Examiner rejects claims 3-5 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shioto in view of Pinsky. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. However, to expedite prosecution, Applicants assert that claims 3-5 and 11 variously depend from amended independent claim 1 which incorporates the allowable subject matter. Applicants also assert that claims 3-5 and 11 are differentiated from the cited references for the same reasons as set forth above, in addition to their own respective features.

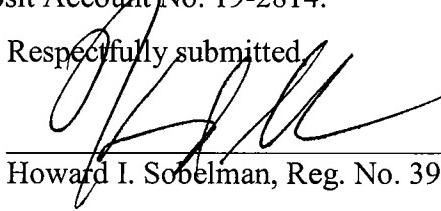
The Examiner next rejects claim 6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shioto in view of the Well Known Prior Art. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. However, to expedite prosecution, Applicants assert that claim 6 depends from amended independent claim 1 which incorporates the allowable subject matter. Applicants also assert that claim 6 is differentiated from the cited references for the same reasons as set forth above, in addition to its own respective features.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

The Examiner rejects claim 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Sato, U.S. Patent No. 2001/0011301 (“Sato”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. However, to expedite prosecution, Applicants assert that the above amendments to independent claim 12 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of claim 13 render this rejection moot.

In view of the above remarks and amendments, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims properly set forth that which Applicants regard as their invention and are allowable over the cited references. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request allowance of the pending claims. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the Examiner’s convenience, if that would help further prosecution of the subject application. Applicants authorize and respectfully request that any fees due be charged to Deposit Account No. 19-2814.

Respectfully submitted,


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